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ABSTRACT

Many techniques can be utilized to improve citizen attitude toward police. Research in social psychology provides considerable information concerning attitude change processes. This paper explores interpersonal attraction (attitudes toward individuals) and helping behavior (assisting others) within the broader context of attitude change. Laboratory and field studies have revealed a number of factors which influence interpersonal attraction, including similarity of traits and attitudes, frequency of contact, reciprocal liking, and physical attractiveness. The practical application of these factors is discussed. The second area of exploration, helping behavior, is, additionally, related to attitude change. Several factors mediate helping behavior, including moral norms, particular moods, rewards, and models. Applications of these factors are discussed. Four major theoretical frameworks regarding attitude change are also examined, as well as the practical application of these frameworks. It is suggested that many of the principles of social psychology be employed, but that thorough planning take place to determine how the principles can best be applied in a particular situation. Research should be fully explored before implementation of programs. (KA)

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Applications of Social Psychology in Police-Community Relations*

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Applications of Social Psychology in Police-Community Relations

The present paper concentrates on techniques which can improve citizen attitude toward police. The approach taken evolves out of social psychology, in which there has been over half a century of research in attitude change processes. Unfortunately, this resource base has been infrequently utilized by the police system. Laboratory and field studies have established certain factors as augmenters of positive attitudes. Additionally, several theoretical approaches have evolved. This paper will explore practical applications of these factors and theories which have been and which could be employed. For purposes of the paper, the study of interpersonal attraction (attitudes toward individuals) and helping behavior (assisting others) are included within the broader area of attitude change.

Interpersonal Attraction

Certain factors are able to promote positive interpersonal attraction. The purpose here is not to include and fully discuss the possible applications of each. Rather, it is to lay out the wide range of empirically based factors which might be practically employed. The hope is that such employment will improve the citizen's attitude toward police because it increases the police officer's interpersonal attractiveness.

The most researched elicitor of positive attraction is the possession of attitudes and traits which are similar to those of the individual whom you want to attract. The phenomenon is stable enough that the degree of attraction for another is related linearly to the proportion of similar attitudes between the individuals (Byrne & Nelson, 1965).

An Organization for Economic Opportunity study concluded that it was a necessity in some situations to place more Blacks on the police force to improve "police responsiveness to ghetto definitions of police roles, functions, and accountability to the community" (Kelly, 1975, p. 57). The effectiveness of such a policy can be viewed simply in terms of similarity of traits and attitudes. A Black citizen will be more attracted to someone similar in traits (race) and someone whom the citizen believes probably has similar attitudes. It is the belief that another has similar attitudes (be it true or not) that enhances attraction.

Such a factor can be utilized in several ways. In police-community meetings or media campaigns, police should express agreement with current citizen beliefs. The effects of attitudinal similarity was seen in San Francisco's "Police and Community Enterprise" project (Eisenburg, 1973). After group

discussion, citizens composed of several types, such as black youth groups and addicts, showed a 27% to 57% rise in affirmative response to the question: "Do you personally respect most policemen in the neighborhood?" Group discussions centered around presentation of attitudes, shattering myths about the other group and promoting understanding of diverging views. Additionally, in any form of interaction with citizens (day-to-day interaction, group meetings, high school visits) police should express views similar to those of its constituency, be it talking about football, cooking, taxes, whatever. Hopefully this can be done within the limits of sincerity. Such conversation, though seemingly trivial, can be a base on which cooperation on more law-enforcement related matters can be established. The more traits which police share with the particular constituency they patrol, the more likely they will be favorably looked upon. This fact should be considered when making geographical or task-related placement of officers.

Research has also established that individuals are more attracted to those with whom they are in more frequent contact. For example, the morecontact a student had with an individual in an apartment complex, the more likely the student would become a friend of that person (Festinger, Schacter & Back, 1950). This factor has been employed in several ways by police, though it may not have been done so purposely. One project which successfully changed citizen (student) attitudes involved citizen-police rap sessions, joint dinners, encounter groups, and squad car rides (Diamond & Lobitz, 1973). An underlying feature of these activities is greater contact between police and citizens. Parker (1974), Kellam (1971), and Lipsitt and Steinbruner (1969) report successful attitude change through joint police-community

discussions. The target groups for the three studies were ghetto residents, ghetto residents , and community leaders, respectively.

More extended use of this contact hypothesis can be made. The more police-community activities the better, even those not relevant to crime-related matters. The closer the patrol officers is to the citizen the better, e.g., walking on the beat and conversing rather than riding in cars. A potentially very beneficial plan would have police living within the area they patrol. Short of this, it would be advisable for police to be involved in non-crime related community activities.

Another factor promoting positive interpersonal feeling is "reciprocal liking," i.e., we like those who like us (Backman & Secord, 1959). By going through sensitivity sessions on their own, police have learned to be more sensitive and friendly toward citizens (Sata, 1975). Such sensitivity connotes to citizens that the officer likes them and is concerned for them. The result is that the citizen likes the policeman more. Police-community rap sessions may also allow police to express feelings of liking to citizens. Psychological studies also show that individuals tend to reciprocate actions--in this case, sensitivity and friendliness (Berkowitz, 1973). Thus in everyday interaction, the more the police show concern and liking for the citizen the more these actions will be reciprocated. Certainly such expressions of friendliness can be expressed in the general tone of all communication directed toward citizens. It would be hoped that such expressions of liking and friendliness could be given sincerely rather than as standard behavior the officer is ordered to follow. The police should find several of the principles outlined in this paper applicable to changing attitudes (within its own ranks) toward citizens.

As might be expected, we like those who provide us with rewards and benefits (Kaplan & Olczak, 1970). A less obvious fact is that we are attracted to individuals in the presence of whom we have been rewarded, even if those persons were not involved at all in the providing of the reward. For example, in one experiment certain members of a children's group were given car models by the experimenter while others were not. Those children receiving models gave higher attractiveness ratings to other group members than did those children not receiving rewards (Lott & Lott, 1960).

The best way to reward the citizen is to provide services the citizen desires. The OEO study previously cited found that most citizens desired police officers to be crime stoppers, not social workers (Kelly, 1975). This does not mean that police should not interact sensitively with citizens; it merely means that citizens state that they want the police to fight crimes and not to be social workers. This is true even though the vast majority of actual calls to police are of a social service nature (Cumming, Cumming & Edell, 1964. Thus citizens do want the police to be crime stoppers, but their day-to-day interaction is often of a social service nature. Obviously, reducing crimes would reward the citizen and would result in changed attitudes toward police. But in a sense this is putting the cart before the horse. One reason we seek to change citizen attitudes is so that citizens will be more helpful to police in the prevention of crimes. We do not seek to prevent crimes in order to change citizen attitudes. But the technique of providing rewards can be used in another way to change citizen attitudes. The police can survey and then fulfill non-crime related services which citizens both say they desire, and those they actually call the police about. Perhaps if other

desired needs are met, citizens' attitudes will change enough so that various benefits of good police-community relations will be gained, including cooperation for crime related activities. Some training programs have centered on police learning how to handle family violence (Bard & Zarker, 1971). Trojanowicz and Dixon (1974) suggest that police should be disseminators of information. The information might relate to warding off rape, protecting property, or getting citizen patrols to watch the streets. Such a "blockwatcher" program was established in St. Louis. Many citizen problems can be handled more personally and expeditiously through informal storefront operations (as in St. Louis) or by non-gun-toting community service officers. A police-school liaison program operated in Flint, Michigan, in which police acted as combination law enforcers and counselors (Trojanowicz & Dixon, 1974). Sponsoring movies and dances, or having a group of singing policemen who perform at local schools and community functions, may even win more friends than the services listed above.

Police can also utilize the fact that we are attracted to those in the presence of whom we have been rewarded. Officers should be more evident as community members at neighborhood sporting events, parties, bazaars, etc. By being associated with reward givers, police can also make favorable impressions. For example, the Holland, Michigan, Police Department had a "Community Service Unit Program" in which they became the liaison between citizens and the various community service programs in the city (Trojanowicz & Dixon, 1974). The police have long been associated with the Boy Scouts and the Boys Clubs.

That a willingness (by police) to provide greater services can lead to a change in citizen attitudes and eventually to a reduction in crime is reflected in the so-called "community service" approach to crime control (Wilson, 1975). Such an approach involves officers who patrol small areas and attempt to learn the area and to more fully

interact with and meet the needs of the citizens than traditionally occurs. The community service approach "is based on the assumption that if officer are encouraged to become familiar with the neighborhoods in which they work and to take larger responsibilities following through on citizens' requests for assistance as well as on complaints of crime, they will win the confidence of those whom they are to protect and thereby elicit more cooperative assistance from the public and better intelligence about criminal activities" (Wilson, 1975, pp. 90-91). Such programs have been successful in reducing crime in those areas of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Rochester, New York, in which they were employed. In Cincinnati, nearly 90% of the citizens in the experimental districts stated in interviews that the police "handled various incidents in a good or very good manner" (Wilson, 1975, p. 95).

But similar type programs are not always successful in producing attitude change. In a middle-sized Northeastern city, a two year project entitled "Crime Control Team" was conducted. It resulted in no difference in attitude changes toward police between those districts employing and those not employing the project. Such a failure should lead us to study such programs thoroughly until we determine the best real life application of the empirically based principles discussed in the paper.

The above discussion has centered on many possible services the police could provide. No comment has been made on the still raging controversy over the proper role of the police (Roberg, 1976). The view here is that as long as the police are performing non-crime related tasks that the fullest extent should be made of them in improving police-community relations.

Another elicitor of attraction is physical attractiveness. It often outweighs seemingly more important factors such as intelligence and various personality traits (Walster, et. al., 1966). Police uniform changes made in Menlo Park, California, contributed to attitude changes which were reflected in a survey (Tenzel & Cizanckas, 1976). Wicks (1974) presents recommendations he believes police departments should follow. Several fall within the category of improving physical attractiveness, e.g., training officers to have good posture, to be healthy, and to speak with good clear voices. Grooming and weight standards should add to physical attractiveness. The issue of physical attractiveness seems trivial, yet research has shown its importance in interpersonal attraction. As stated by Baron, et. al. (1974): "Beauty is only skin deep, but people pay a lot of attention to skin".

Finally, individuals are attracted to others who self-disclose, i.e., who reveal personal information about themselves. One study found that the higher the degree of self-disclosure, the greater was the attraction (Worthy, Gary & Kahn, 1969). Encounter groups promote self-disclosure and they have been successfully employed to change citizen attitudes (Diamond & Lobitz, 1973). Any group meetings between police and citizens could leave opportunities for police to self-disclose to a certain degree. It may involve rap sessions, dinners, police-community football games, whatever. In media campaigns, police could talk in human terms of the problems they go through, and of the pride they feel when doing a good job.

Helping Behavior

Going hand in hand with citizen attitude change is the attempt to gain direct aid from the citizen in various activities, (such as combatting crime). Berkowitz, in his extensive review of the

literature, discusses several factors which mediate helping behavior: moral norms, particular moods, rewards, and models (Berkowitz, 1973). He concludes that some helping behavior derives from the moral norm of social responsibility. A moral norm eliciting more helping behavior is that of reciprocity, i.e., we feel we should help those who help us. We are also more likely to help others if we are either in a good mood, feel guilty about some situation, or feel empathy for someone who needs help. Helping behavior which is rewarded is more likely to occur in the future. Finally, we are morelikely to help others if we first witness a helping action by another. Applications of these four factors are discussed below.

Several police projects have involved joint police-citizen role playing procedures. Such projects usually involve members of each group acting out the typical behavior pattern the other group must employ in everyday police-citizen interaction. For citizens, such role playing promotes empathy for the policeman and thus should lead to more helping behavior. Police attitudes should also change, and this should lead to reciprocal actions from citizens.

A successful project in Syracuse involved mutual role playing (Parker, 1974). A project in Houston was a contributing factor to the prevention of riots in June of 1968 (Sikes, 1969). Procedures consisted of role playing, psychodrama, and a confrontation between citizens and police in which each presented the other with statements concerning images of themselves and of the other group. In Flint, Michigan, each group participated in role playing of "critical incidents" which occur between citizens and police, and which often escalte to conflict (Trojanowicz & Dixon, 1974). Though it was not formally evaluated, a citizen-police role playing venture in 1962 led Houston Mayor Welch to state that the project resulted in fewer

police-abuse complaints and a general feeling of lessening hostility in police-community encounters.

In addition to role playing, any sessions which involve self disclosure, such as encounter groups between police and citizens (Diamond & Lobitz, 1973), will probably lead to more feelings of empathy and more helping behavior.

Helping behavior could also be gained by instilling feelings of guilt within the citizen for not assisting the police in their activities. This approach could be tried within a media campaign. The campaign could establish a sense of responsibility for helping police and a sense of guilt if the responsibility is not taken. The need to train citizens to assume responsibility in law enforcement was recommended by an OEO report (Kelly, 1975).

Research has shown that a moral norm of social responsibility will elicit helping behavior. Perhaps it can be aroused for law enforcement purposes. The moral norm of reciprocity might also be employed. By emphasizing the efforts put forth by police (and of the help they deserve), there is a greater likelihood of receiving help. These moral norm feelings experienced by citizens could be better channelled into helping behavior if the police made available the exact procedures citizens should follow in order to help.

Following another psychological principle, the more the helping action can be rewarding on its own to the citizen, the more likely such an action will be taken (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). Pedestrians were more likely to give directions to a stranger if they had been previously praised rather than rebuked for taking a helping action earlier in the day (Baron, Byrne & Griffit, 1974). Thus the more the citizen believes an action will bring praise or material benefits the more likely help will be given. 12

Finally, citizens will more likely aid police if they have a

Finally, citizens will more likely aid police if they have a model to follow. Demonstrations of citizens' helping can be emphasized in media reports. Direct observation of one's own community members helping police would probably be more effective. If only a few citizens in an area could be motivated to openly display continual helping behavior, the likelihood of others responding would be greatly enhanced. As seen from the above paragraphs, little beyond the use of role playing (which promotes empathy) has been applied to increase the likelihood of citizen helping behavior.

Theories of Attitude Change

Though this section will deal with general theories of attitude change, the emphasis will remain on practical applications rather than theoretical debate. No attempt is made to present alternative theoretical explanations for any particular application presented. Also, the purpose again is not to fully explore each idea, but to lay out the possibilities for application. Four major theoretical frameworks regarding attitude change will be covered. The practical applications discussed below attempt to apply the theoretical principles in ways they would probably have the most success.

Cognitive dissonance theory states that whenever one has two cognitions which are in conflict, one experiences dissonance (Himmelfarb & Eagly, 1974). As an example, an individual will experience cognitive dissonance if he or she believes cigarettes are bad, but also is aware they smoke three packs of cigarettes a day. Dissonance is an unpleasant state which a person attempts to alleviate. This can be done by changing an attitude. One study had role-playing subjects advocate that people should stop smoking (Janis & Mann, 1965). The result was that these subjects changed their attitude more concerning stopping smoking than did subjects hearing

the same information about smoking via a taped message. This result supports cognitive dissonance theory for the following reason. It is dissonant to be a smoker and to advocate the stopping of smoking at the same time. Dissonance can be reduced by deciding to stop smoking. Thus cognitive dissonance can cause attitude change.

A study by Parker (1974) successfully employed role playing to change attitudes toward police. The dissonance principle can be applied within media campaigns. Two dissonant cognitions might be emphasized in a broadcast message. For example, it might be emphasized how much people desire crime to be stopped, yet how they do very little about it. Any situation which allows the police to bring conflicting cognitions into the minds of citizens presents a ripe opportunity for attitude change.

Several versions of learning theory try to explain attitude change. The one presented briefly here is that of Hovland and his associates (Himmelfarb & Eagly, 1974). The fundamental principle is that in order for an attitude to change there must be incentive to do so. In other words, there must be rewarding consequences if the change is to be made. Hovland was able to show that in any persuasion attempt, certain factors were the best mediators of attitude change. Hovland manipulated variables concerning the communicator, the message, and the situation. He found that as he manipulated the rewarding value of these variables, he affected the degree of attitude change. The present paper deals only with the communicator variable. As might be expected, studies have found that sources higher in credibility produce more attitude change. For example, statements about atomic submarines produced more attitude change when they were attributed to Robert Oppenheimer rather than to Pravda (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Additionally, attitude change is promoted when communicators speak against their own interests; such as when criminals advocated giving

more power to the courts (Walster, et.al., 1966).

Hovland's learning theory seems most applicable to speeches about the police or media campaigns. One should use communicators who have high credibility in the community, possibly community leaders. In Detroit, a radio announcer well respected in the Black community conducted a program entitled "Buzz the Fuzz" in which the police commissioner and citizens received phone-in complaints. Communicators who seemingly have no reason to support the police would also be valuable to have. One might use convicted criminals, individuals who have been mistreated by police, or people who still support the police although they have been robbed and never recovered their money.

Social judgement theory states that individuals exposed to new information on an issue always judge that information in relation to their existing view on the issue. Their existing attitude is an anchor against which new information is evaluated (Himmelfarb & Eagly, 1974). Information too discrepant from the old attitude is rejected and no attitude change occurs. Such information is within the so-called latitude of rejection. Information totally discrepant may even cause the attitude to change in the opposite direction. The more the information is discrepant from the existing attitude, but still within the latitude of acceptance, the greater is the attitude change. The theory has gained empirical support (Hovland, Harvey & Sherif, 1957).

As with learning theory, social judgment theory is probably most applicable to speeches or media campaigns. For example, before addressing an audience, one needs to know the existing attitude toward police which the group has. The speech should only present views within the latitude of acceptance. The main point to be stressed is that a standard speech or media presentation is not the right policy to follow. One must investigate the pre-existing attitude.

The functional theory of attitude change is the final one to be[14] covered. The variant ofthe theory to be presented here is that of Katz (Himmelfarb & Eagly, 1974). The basic principle is that individuals hold attitudes for different reasons. This must be taken into account in attitude change attempts. Any individual attitude serves one or more of four possible functions. It may serve an instrumental function, i.e., to gain rewards or minimize punishment. It can serve a knowledge function--to maintain a stable, structured world. It may serve an ego-defensive function, i.e., to protect the individual from psychological threat, such as repressed unconscious impulses. Or it may serve a value expressive function; that is, to allow the individual to express his or her views and values. Attitude change is more effective if such information is taken into account. For example, Wagman (1955) found that those high in ego-defensiveness changed their prejudicial attitudes more with authoritarian suggestions than with attempts to restructure the logic of the individuals.

Functional theory can be applied in a manner analogous to that of social judgement theory. Before attitude change is attempted, one should gain information concerning why the group or individual holds their present attitude. For example, a group of intellectuals may hold their opinion of police for value expressive purposes. Possibly their principal familiarity with police comes from reading. If this group were being addressed, it would probably be best to have an appeal of an informational nature. As another example, some individuals may not help police out of fear of criticism or physical attack. Thus the attitude and behavior serve an instrumental function. To change the attitude, one may need to express the rewards, including a reduction in fear, that would be gained by an attitudinal and behavioral change toward police.

As opposed to earlier mentioned "experimental techniques" such as role playing, encounter groups, and discussion groups, it is within the format of lectures (speeches) and printed material that the principles of learning, functional, and social judgement theory can best be applied. Because of the dramatic procedures and active individual involvement of the experimental techniques, they will usually result in some degree of attitude change. The success of such techniques was seen earlier in the paper. Attitude change in lecture oriented programs involving citizens and/or police has been less successful.

Lecture oriented programs in Washington, D.C., and Muskegum, Michigan, were unsuccessful in attempts to change police attitudes toward citizens (Trojanowicz & Dixon, 1974). As opposed to the dramatic and participatory experimental techniques, it is important taht the principles established in the attitude change theories be adhered to fairly closely to be successful. In the Muskegum project, police attitudes changed toward Mexican-Americans but not toward Blacks after police heard lectures concerning the history and other aspects of these two minority groups. The attitudes toward Blacks even worsened for some officers. Perhaps the initial attitude toward Blacks and Mexican-Americans were such that the same type arguments used in both presentations fell within the lattitude of acceptance concerning Mexican-Americans, but within the lattitude of rejection concerning Blacks. Not all lecture oriented programs have been unsuccessful. Derbyshire (1963) described successful attitude change toward police inthird grade students.

Conclusions, Comments and Cautions

It is important to note once more that this paper does not attempt to go deeply into all possible attitude change techniques. It is an introduction which sets forth a realm of possibilities found within the research area of attitude change. Thus it is hoped that those

interested in the concepts expressed would either check the available literature or consult with someone who is familiar with the research.

In establishing an attitude change campaign there is need to adapt to the situation and to plan thoroughly ahead. This is true regarding large scale media campaigns and day-to-day citizen-police interaction. The need to plan ahead was seen several times in the paper. The social judgement and functional theories require investigation of existing attitudes before changes can be made. Other information can also be investigated, such as the type rewards citizens desire of police.

The campaign employed must also adapt to the situation involved; among other things, it must consider what type citizens are involved (e.g., socio-economic class, how bad the situation is, what resources are available, what type of attitude or behavior change is desired, and what is known about the structure and functions of the existing attitudes. It would be helpful to periodically survey citizens regarding what they desire of the police. Carte (1975) found that while a 1938 survey stressed detachment of police from politics and outside influence, a 1971 survey stressed citizen desires for more citizen influence in the policy formation of the police.

There have been many principles presented in this paper. It requires thorough planning to decide how these principles can best be applied in a particular situation. Additionally, only certain principles may be applicable in a given set of circumstances. For example, as Wilson (1975) contends, certain segments of the ghetto community will just not participate in many of the traditional community relations programs. But with proper application, many of the principles described in this paper can be employed in changing the attitudes of ghetto minority citizens. In San Francisco, a PCR unit was

established which took action such as informing citizens of their rights, helping citizens gain jobs, spending time with youth, and taking complaints. This enabled the PCR unit to gain the confidence of many minority group members (Skolnick, 1968). The above actions employ several of the principles outlined in the paper, e.g., providing rewards, expressing empathy and respect (liking), and instituting greater friendly contact with citizens. Unfortunately, due to conflict within the police department and other outside circumstances, the program lost it effectiveness. Also, two projects discussed earlier (Parker, 1974; Kellam, 1971) resulted in attitude change of ghetto residents.

Many specific programs employing principles described in the paper may be employed, e.g., role playing sessions, police-community meetings, and revised media campaign. But there must also be an overall training of officers so that their individual interaction with citizens promotes positive attraction.

In the view of the author there is one tactic which would most effectively promote positive attraction and helping behavior toward police. It requires that the police officer live within the area in which he works. Such a policy utilizes several of the factors which promote positive attraction and helping behavior. There will be greater physical proximity and thus more attraction. Among other opportunities, there is more chance for the police to self disclose, to show they like the citizen, and to show they hold many attitudes similar to that of the citizen. Additionally, a citizen is more likely to model the actions of a fellow community member than a police outsider. In general any technique which involves police-citizen contact will allow many opportunities for positive interaction to develop.

Two other recommendations can be made. It would be advisable for police to work with a psychologist (or psychologist-criminologist) well versed in the principles outlined in the paper. Additionally, it may not suffice to use only one or two of the principles to change ingrained attitudinal patterns. This is the tack now employed by those who do run police-community programs. It requires employing the principles as effectively as research indicates they can be employed. Finally, it will require more widespread usewithin the community; i.e., more citizens must be involved, and more often. As described in the paper, the techniques and principles expounded upon have been successfully employed both in the laboratory and in police-community relations programs. If there is a lack of a general improvement of citizen attitudes toward police, it can very well be attributed to the above points.

Finally, several cautions are in order. Research in attitude change is not as clear cut in its conclusions as might appear from this paper. Sometimes there are intervening variables which make it necessary to modify one's conclusions about another factor. For example, it was stated earlier that if one expresses liking for another, that the liking is reciprocated. Research has shown that if the liking actions are seen as insincere, the amount of reciprocated liking will be less (Insko & Schopler, 1972). Thus one should fully investigate the research concerning the particular principles to be employed.

A second caution is one which is always relevant to laboratory results. Will the findings be applicable to real life situations? Fortunately, some of the findings discussed here have been conducted in field settings. Additionally, many principles have already been utilized in police programs. But with those factors that have been studied only in the laboratory, it may be necessary to first do testing on a small scale.

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